

Preparing for Hurricane Season 2006

The 2006 Hurricane season is now upon the state of Alabama, but the devastation of the 2005 hurricane season remains fresh on everyone's mind. From Hurricane Dennis that made land-fall as a category three, to the mind-boggling destruction of hurricane Katrina to Rita that dealt Florida and Texas a blow. Several months later, two questions are frequently asked, what did the state of Alabama learn from last year's hurricane season, and are we ready for the upcoming season? Alabama Emergency Management Agency Director Bruce P. Baughman says this state is ready. He says the agency learned some key things last year, "the need to request supplies further in advance and after they arrive making sure they are better utilized." With that lesson in mind, Baughman is asking FEMA for 100 trucks of water, ice and meals ready to eat be prepositioned at Maxwell AFB, prior to the start of hurricane season.

Junior colleges throughout the state have been approved for shelters. The 31 sites will provide housing for more than 21, 000 evacuees. There are 14 medical need shelters in addition to the Red Cross shelters that can house more than 90,000 people. For our coastal counties a revised evacuation plan is being considered. This plan allows school bus drivers to pick-up residents with no transportation along their route. It's estimated about 1,000 buses would be available from Mobile and Baldwin counties. The buses should have the capability to move about 30,000 people, and their personal items to a predesignated shelter.

In a continued effort to make sure we are prepared this season, state EMA personnel have gone through extensive training and hot washes. In March, the National Emergency Management Association addressed issues with EMAC (Emergency Management Assistance Compact) that occurred during the last hurricane season. The purpose of EMAC is to provide a mechanism through which the states can easily share resources and costs associated with using these resources. On April 21th the Alabama Governor's Hurricane workshop was held in Montgomery. This meeting brought together leaders from local, state and federal levels. It also included the director of the National Weather Service, Max Mayfield. The workshop was designed to candidly address the issues where improvements are needed. The first week in May, about 75 Emergency Managers participated in the Alabama Hurricane Response/Recovery Workshop. The three day training course was held in Chilton County. On May 23rd more than 100 Emergency Manager Coordinators participated in the SEOC activation exercise. This full scale exercise addressed real-life scenarios that occurred during the 2005 hurricane season. The 2006 hurricane season ends November 30th.